



Office of the Churchill County Manager

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Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U.S. Department of Energy
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North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0307

RECEIVED

JUL 17 2001

RE: Supplement to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for a Geologic Repository for the Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste at Yucca Mountain, Nye County, Nevada

Dear Dr. Summerson:

Churchill County has reviewed the subject Supplement and is providing the following comments.

1 We remain concerned about the use of the so-called repository design evolution concept, particularly in light of the need to meet certain statutorily imposed schedule requirements. DOE currently has four design options in the DEIS. According to DOE, each of the designs would meet the regulatory standards for Yucca Mountain. If this is the case, why does DOE continue to pursue changes and so-called improvements to the design because the waste container and drip shielding provide the most of the containment? 2 The Supplement provides very little in terms of additional information regarding the performance of the waste package and materials used to construct the waste package and drip shield. Given the repository's dependence upon the engineered barriers, DOE needs to demonstrate that those individual components will perform for 10,000 years.

We agree with the State of Nevada's position on the use of design evolution. They state in their comments to the supplement:

"The DEIS Supplement is insufficient in that it fails to provide a specific description of alternatives for how the Proposed Action, "to construct, operate and monitor, and eventually close a geologic repository at Yucca Mountain for the disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste," could be accomplished. Instead the flexible design is "representative of a range of foreseeable future design features and operating modes, and the conservative estimates of the associated potential environmental impacts [that] encompass or bound the potential impacts of foreseeable future repository design evolution."

(Page S-2). The Supplement does not identify specific design alternatives, from which one could be selected, and evaluate and compare their potential impacts. It only provides an update (current as of May, 2001) of design evolution that has taken place since issuance of the DEIS. Furthermore, there is no basis to accept the assertion that the potential environmental impacts are encompassed in the Supplement's analyses, since the DEIS made the same claim in 1999, and the design continues to evolve, even as we are commenting on this Supplement."

- 3 The proposed action in the Supplement calls for DOE to establish an interim storage facility to age waste before emplacement. It is questionable whether the proposed surface aging facility violates the provisions of the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act which forbids a monitored retrievable storage facility to be constructed at the proposed repository site. Coincidentally, the proposed aging facility has the approximate capacity of the proposed private fuel storage at Skull Valley, Utah. DOE should have incorporated Skull Valley in the Supplement as a possible alternative to the surface aging facility at Yucca Mountain, particularly in light of the prohibition to an MRS. The surface aging facility is a significant departure from the proposals in the DEIS and yet there appears to be very limited discussions of its impacts in the document.
- 4 The Supplement also indicates that as many as 6,000 additional canisters may be placed in Yucca Mountain. This is approximately a 50 percent increase in the number of canisters to be placed in the repository. The Supplement should have provided some discussion on this increase along with the potential for greater storage volumes over and above the statutory limits of 70,000 metric tons. If the repository is to expand in overall size, have all the areas been adequately characterized?
- 5 Page 3-21 indicates that the waste packages will remain intact for the duration of the performance period. Although EPA has established a 10,000 year performance period, DOE has the obligation to show the impacts from the proposal regardless of the timeframe. By limiting the analysis to 10,000 years, DOE has truncated the impact assessment. Therefore, peak dose from the proposal should be included in the Supplement.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me at the above address or Rex Massey at (775) 849-9701.

Sincerely



Bjorn P. Selinder
County Manager

Cc: Board of County Commissioners